

MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS & CULTURE OF ETHIOPIA (MYSC)

YOUTH POLICY

Preface

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) has undertaken measures that enable youth to be citizens with democratic outlook, professional competence, skill and ethics so that they can actively, efficiently and widely participate in and benefit from the country's ongoing activities that are aimed at attaining a democratic system and accelerated development. In order to realize this mission, at the very outset, there was a need to fill in the institutional and policy gaps that existed in the past. To this effect, the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture was established in such a way as to follow-up, direct and co-ordinate youth affairs at federal level. Similarly, Youth bureaus have also been organized in regional states.

Formulating youth policy is among the primary duties and responsibilities vested in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. The Ministry, in order to formulate the policy formed a task force composed of representatives from various bodies to conduct a comprehensive study on the situation of youth in Ethiopia. The Ministry, based on the findings of this study, formulated a policy framework and presented it for discussion at both national and regional level to stakeholders. By so doing, the Ministry made efforts to bring about the participation of partners and collaborators. Measures have also been taken to the effect that more than fifty percent of the participants were youth.

Essentially, the policy aims at enabling youth to participate, in an organized manner, in the process of building a democratic system, good governance and development endeavors, and benefit fairly from the outcomes.

There is no doubt that youth must organize themselves and be in a position to play a leadership role in order to ensure their participation and benefits. All stakeholders are therefore duty bound to support concertedly the efforts of youth with a view to empowering them by

building their capacity and competence. In order to direct this integrated activity, it has become necessary to formulate this Youth Policy. The policy was endorsed at the 100th FDRE Council of Ministers regular meeting that was held on March 12/2004.

The Ministry takes this opportunity to thank members of the task force who fully participated by providing professional and technical support in the process of formulating the policy, the governmental organizations and NGOs which they represented, and all bodies which directly or indirectly provided support to the policy formulation process. The Ministry also calls on all concerned parties to contribute towards the implementation of the policy.

SECTION ONE

Various communities and cultures in Ethiopia and other countries maintain different views and outlook about youth depending on the level of their social and economic development. This being the case, there is no single definition for the word "Youth". Some countries define the word "Youth " . as young persons whose age bracket ranges between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Others refer to young persons as "Youth" when they start to engage themselves in activities that are considered by the community to be expressions of adulthood.

On the other hand, there are those who, by associating "Youth" with biological growth consider the attaining of physical development and maturity and the undergoing physical and psychological changes as manifestations of youthful age. Among all these definitions, the one that is based on age has been found most suitable for research and policy purposes.

Governmental organizations, NGOs and civic associations in Ethiopia and other countries adopt and use various age ranges for the concept "Youth" from the standpoint of the purpose which they stand for and the activities they undertake. For example, the United Nations (UN) defines the youth as persons between 15-24 years;WHO,10-24; and the

Ethiopian Social Security and Development Policy, 15-24.

Experiences of other countries indicate that different age ranges have been used in defining youth. For example, Uganda has used the age ranges 12-30; Mauritius 14-29; South Africa 14-28; India 15-35; Nigeria 18-35; Djibouti 16-30 for defining youth.

Taking in to consideration the age ranges given from different directions indicated above and the objective conditions prevailing in our country, and in order to mobilize and utilize the potential capacities and competence of youth for the building of a democratic system and development purposes, this Youth Policy defines youth as to include part of the society who are between 15-29; years.

Needless to say, the active participation of all segments of the society is an important element to bring about accelerated political, economic, social and cultural development in any country. Since the youth are not only receptive to new ideas but also have the potential capacity for creativity and productivity, they can play a major role in all sectors of development. In order to translate their potential energies and capabilities into fruitful action, however, they need favorable environment. If these conditions are not satisfied, they can immediately fall into the abyss of desperation, neglect everything and can become passive observers of the activities undertaken in the society. Not only that, they will also be exposed to social evils. Fully cognizant of this, numerous countries have given special attention to addressing youth issues. Accordingly, these countries have established institutions that are concerned with and taking care of youth affairs. After having formulated policies and strategies, they are in the process of carrying out organized and integrated activities.

In Ethiopia, because of the fact that proper attention has not been given to addressing youth issues and their organizations, therefore, mutual cooperation and networking among youth, family, society, other partners and government had hardly been created. Various governmental institutions, in line with their respective policies which they have formulated to realize their missions, have been making efforts to address the problems and needs of youth. However, these efforts are not being made in an integrated and satisfactory manner.

Consequently, there were no favorable conditions under which the youth could actively and effectively participate in the process of national development and perform multi-faceted tasks that would help accelerate economic and social development, which would in turn ensure their benefits and that of their society.

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has, after having closely examined and given serious attention to the issue, established the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture that has the duty and responsibility to follow up, direct and coordinate youth affairs. In a similar manner, measures have been taken to organize youth bureaus in the regional states. In order to alleviate the problems faced by youth the organization of executive bodies per se would not suffice. It has therefore become necessary to formulate a comprehensive National Youth Policy that would enable the youth to register meaningful results and benefit from the results by actively, efficiently, and widely participating in the country's development efforts and the building of a democratic system through the coordination and integration of the hitherto separate efforts being made by various bodies.

A favorable political environment is prevailing in present day Ethiopia. Development induced policies and strategies have been formulated and the government has taken a firm position to wards translating these policies into practical action. More than at any time in the past, priorities and serious attention have been given to capacity building activities with a view to effectively implementing these policies. This being the case, there is an urgent and immediate need for formulating a national youth policy that would help to facilitate conditions under which the youth would be participants and beneficiaries of all these efforts.

The Ministry has, in line with the duties and responsibilities vested in it, prepared this National Youth Policy with a view to creating conducive environment under which the youth will develop a shared vision and national consensus and nurture a sense of ownership on national issues and issues concerning themselves, and participate in their country's political, economic, social and cultural development endeavors and benefit fairly from the outcomes of the efforts.

This National Youth Policy is based on a study conducted by a task force whose members consisted of experts from relevant government institutions, non-governmental offices and representatives of youth associations. As the data and information used, as inputs in the study were secondary sources, they have their own limitations. However, these information and data served as a useful basis for formulating the policy by indicating the prevailing general situation.

In order to increase the role of the policy implementers at an early stage and create a sense of ownership, various consultations that would help gather and compile the views and opinions of stakeholders and partners were organized and conducted both at federal and regional levels. The youth, which constituted more than 50% of the participants, freely and openly expressed their views at these consultative forums.

This policy document is divided into eight sections including this Introduction. Section Two deals with general youth situation while Section Three gives explanations on the vision and objective of the policy. Section Four describes the basic principles of the policy and Section Five deals with major policy issues. In Section Six policy implementation strategies are described whereas Section Seven deals with the role of various bodies regarding policy implementation. Finally, miscellaneous provisions are included in Section Eight.

Section Two

Population censuses and projections conducted in different years show that youth constitute a high proportion of the Ethiopian population. For instance, according to the 1999 medium variant projection, Ethiopia's population was estimated at 63.5 million out of which 17.9 million or 28.2% (14.2% male and 14% female) were youth. Of these, 17.9% and 82.1% were living in urban and rural areas respectively. According to the 2004 projection, the population will reach 73 million and the youth population will be 28.4% (14.4% male and 14% female) of which 18.6% and 81.4% will be living in urban and rural areas respectively.

Ethiopian youth have carried out multi-faceted activities under the various political systems and during the country's various historic moments. Ethiopian youth had worked together in a spirit of unity whenever issues or problems of national interest cropped up. During the early days when opportunities for acquiring modern education were practically nonexistent, Ethiopian youth contributed towards accelerating the economic development of their country by engaging themselves in activities related to agriculture and handicrafts. They were also simultaneously engaged in the defense of their country against external aggressors. And following the introduction of modern education to Ethiopia, the youth have, by expressing protest against all forms of oppression mounted bitter and persistent struggles for economic and social development, justice, democracy and administrative reform

Young students, especially since the 1960s became pioneers in actively and widely mobilizing the community to struggle for their cause. Ethiopian young students, young workers and young farmers have played important roles in the country's political, economic, social, and cultural development efforts. These young students, young workers and young farmers have participated in the country's development efforts through their own initiatives without government recognition on the other hand, through being embraced by various associations, organizations and groupings that were supported by government, which in form and content had various objectives. They have conducted bitter struggles to bring about drastic positive change in the country by raising the land tenure question, stressing the removal of the decadent political system and other popular issues. Many youths sacrificed their lives for these noble causes. During the period 1974-1990, youth were organized in such a way that they were closely linked with the prevailing political outlook and interest and served the existing political system. As a result, it was a period during which the youth remained isolated from democratic practices. Even during that challenging period, a large number of youth sacrificed their lives in their struggle to ensure the protection of people's human and democratic rights. And their prolonged struggle and the sacrifice they have paid have brought our country to the present stage where the process of building a democratic system is underway.

According to a available data, 44% of the country's population is below the absolute poverty line. Under this situation of poverty, the youth is the hardest hit segment of society. The widespread unemployment prevailing in the country is the main expression of poverty. In situation that is related to poverty, the variance between skilled human resources supplies on the one hand and demand on the other has further widened the gap.

The national labor force survey conducted in 1999 by the Central Statistical Authority indicates that 1,890,249 persons in the age range of 15-64 were unemployed. Out of this 1,260,177 (67%) were youth. The number of female unemployed youth was 899,426 (71.4%) and the corresponding number of males was 360,751 (28.6%). The fact that the majority of the unemployed youth constitute females indicates the magnitude to which young women are the main victims of the problem. The view regarding the alleviation of the problem, especially the perception that the government alone would resolve the problem of unemployment has been a cause for aggravating that very problem.

Although sufficient data and information on the situation of rural and urban youth engaged in the informal sector are not available, it is assumed that rural youth could deploy themselves in off-farm activities. Similarly, as a finding of one study conducted in urban areas to know about the number of people engaged in the informal sector indicated that, out of 146,460 persons engaged in this sector 64,441 or 44% were youth.

Large numbers of rural youth are migrating to urban areas due to abject poverty and in search of better opportunities. However, because job opportunities are scarce in the urban areas, and because urban life is not as they initially expected, many of them are exposed to various social evils and HIV/AIDS pandemic.

When we have an overview of the educational curriculum that had been in use in our country until the recent past, we observe that it was crammed with subjects that would not help in making any significant contribution to the overall development of youth and has not taken into consideration the country's objective socio-economic conditions. At present, however, and deduction and training program and curriculum that could temper problems have been worked out and are put under implementation.

The annual enrolment ratio for the period 1997-2001 shows that enrolment increased on average by 12.5%, 13.6% and 5% in elementary schools, secondary schools and higher institutions respectively. Nevertheless, the number of students in higher institutions continued to remain extremely low compared to those in elementary and secondary schools. This is more evident when the number of female students is considered. It is obvious that special educational programs should be designed to meet the needs of especially talented youth. Services rendered in this regard are inadequate, however. The special education program coverage for youth with special needs excluding those talented ones is less than 1%.

In addition to acquiring formal education, students in schools should ideally be engaged in extra-curricular activities. Unfortunately, such adequate extra-curriculum programs are non-existent in the schools. This shortcoming in schools has hindered the youth from identifying their natural inclinations, developing their special talents and assimilating comprehensive knowledge. Moreover, evidences indicate that the education and training system could not benefit the entire youth due to problems of implementation and shortage of capacity.

The health status of youth is similar to that of the rest of the society. And it is described in relation to the country's economic, social and cultural situation. The health coverage, which was 30% in a decade past, has now reached 61%. It would however be difficult to say that the youth health services coverage has increased at the desired type, quantity and standard, as is the case with rest of the population. In particular, the failure to bring about attitudinal and behavioral changes in society regarding personal hygiene and environmental sanitation has remained to be a major challenge. As is well known, youth are in a state of rapid physical and psychological change. Because of their curiosity, enthusiasm and urge to try and see new phenomenon, a considerable number of youth have become addicted to alcohol, smoking, chat, dangerous

medical drugs and narcotics drugs all of which are detrimental to health. These and many similar health hazards challenge the youth's proper physical, mental and psychological development. As a result, the youth are being exposed to unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, various venereal diseases and most of all, to HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Limited reproductive health services and information and education dissemination services are being rendered through governmental organizations and NGOs. It is however impossible to assume that adequate services are being rendered. Moreover, the services do not specifically focus on youth. Nor are they easily accessible in terms of time and place.

The family, community, schools, the media, cultural institutions and religious organizations are the major institutions from which youth assimilate cultural values. The objective conditions nonetheless indicate that youth are, at present, not getting the required services as desired from these institutions. A considerable number of youth do not have a full knowledge of their cultural values; instead they are entangled in foreign degenerate cultures, have become victims of harmful traditional as well as to unethical practices and exposed to various other social evils.

Society does not seem to have recognized the fact that sports and recreation are essential not only for the youth's physical and mental development and serve as a means of spending their leisure but also considerably serve as platforms where they socialize and develop their communication skill and talent. As is well known, sports have made contributions towards our country's economic development efforts. It has also considerably promoted the country's image at international arena. It would however be difficult to say that all the necessary requirements for the development and expansion of sports in the country have been fully met. Lack of entertainment facilities such as sports centers, theatres and cultural centers in the vicinities of residential areas and in schools; scarcity of public library services where youth could broaden their scope of knowledge; and lack of physical education training institutions have all had negative impacts on the activity which is directed for inculcating ethical values in the minds of youth and creating healthy and productive citizens. As a result, in-school and out-of-school youth have been forced to spend their leisure in undesirable place and corners.

A large number of youth have, because of economic and social problems, been exposed to juvenile delinquency, addiction to dangerous narcotics, prostitution, beggary, street life and to similar other social evils. On the one hand, this condition exposes them to health problems (HIV/AIDS, STD etc.) while on the other, pushes them into engaging in criminal acts. Some 143,169 juvenile delinquents were registered between July 2000 and June 2001 alone. A study conducted in 124 towns in the year 1992, indicated that there were 44,707 sex workers, of which 58.4% were between 15-24 years. The outcome of the study conducted on 500 beggars in Addis

Ababa revealed that 60% of them were below the age of 30 years. All this indicates that a great number of youth spend their most active years not in engagements that are useful for their human development but in activities that expose them to health problems and criminal offenses.

The youth are expected to ensure their safety and well-being by properly participating in the efforts made at national level to prevent the environmental pollution that is being presently witnessed and the negative impact of technological products. In this regard, there are no favorable conditions under which the youth would make contributions on their part by participating in activities related to soil and water conservation, afforestation, heritage protection and other environmental preservation activities. The youth need platforms through which they would be able to alleviate the problems of elderly people, support people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, help needy peoples and engage in activities during disaster situations. But such broad platforms have not been created. In general, youth have not been mobilized in a way that will enable them render integrated environmental protection and community service.

Youth that need special attention are exposed to various injustices, assaults, and abuses because of the physical injuries they have sustained, natural and manmade calamities, and loss of parents, poverty and their gender. Moreover, some segments of the society have distorted and negative attitudes towards such youth. This being the case, they do not have equal chance to participate in and benefit from education, training and employment opportunities.

From this general situation, it is possible to conclude that the major development force that is expected to make important contributions towards extricating the country from the shackles of poverty could not be mobilized along the desired path because it is not guided by a policy. Therefore, the basic mission of the policy is to change the existing objective conditions towards the full utilization of the potential capacity of youth for the country's development effort and the building of a democratic system in an organized manner.